The
# WOOD DUCK

CN ISSN 0049-7886

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB
POSTAL STATION E, BOX 5182 - HAMILTON - ONTARIO

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 8 APRIL 1982

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The Hamilton Naturalists' Club promotes public interest in the study, conservation and appreciation of our natural heritage. Meetings are held monthly from September to May inclusive and visitors are always welcome. Outdoor field events are scheduled for every month, and a complete listing of the entire season may be obtained from the membership secretary.

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## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

A remark made by Dr. Paul Eagles on March 8th during his excellent talk regarding environmentally sensitive areas emphasized a field of endeavour to which the H.N.C. could direct more attention. Over the years records kept by a club such as ours become very important. George North is doing a wonderful job of compiling the bird sightings and each month publishing "Noteworthy Bird Records" in the Wood Duck. George has done this since our bulletin was first published and these records are invaluable. We thank George and all those who contribute to this worthwhile task. Keep up the good work!

But what about plant records? I know there are members who are keeping plant lists but, what about a column in the Wood Duck and a club file of plant records? I am throwing out the challenge. Would you act as compiler to co-ordinate such an activity? Would you work on a plant records committee? Think about it and let us know. Also, as a club we could work at making inventories of plants,etc., in the natural areas of our region. One does not have to be an expert to become involved. This would be a great learning experience which would benefit not only ourselves but future generations as well. I will be waiting to hear from you.

Letters to Write

(1) Parks Canada is discussing the feasibility of establishing a new national park on the northern tip of the Bruce Peninsula within the Township of St. Edmunds and the Township of Lindsay. This is exciting news and Mr. Bob Day,, Parks Canada, P.O. Box 189, Tobermory, Ontario NOH 2RO would be pleased to hear your views. Let him know that you support Parks Canada in this venture.

(2) Ontario's recent Cabinet shuffle created a new Ministry of Recreation and Tourism under the Honourable Reuben Baetz, 1200 Bay St., 12th Floor,Toronto, Ontario M5R 2A5. Should provincial parks be shifted into the new Ministry. The Federation of Ontario Naturalists' and your club's executive support this move. We feel this to be "an ideal opportunity to create a climate for new awareness of parks and a new push to complete the parks system". Write Mr. Baetz now. "A strong show of support for parks now could make all the difference in the kind of parks system we inherit to-morrow".

(Quotations from F.O.N. Memorandum to Activists)

Hopefully the seemingly annual early April snowfall will miss our meeting night this year. Hope to see you Tuesday, April 13. Jo Harschnitz and Joan Page will be on hand to greet you.

Hazel Broker

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## A D V A N C E  N O T I C E

## AN H.N.C. WEEKEND ON THE BRUCE

### JUNE 5th and 6th

Plan to spend a weekend exploring the Bruce Peninsula with Dave Bradley (522-2936) and Hazel Broker(527-0333). Accommodation and food will be the responsibility of each participant. Some may prefer to camp and Cyprus Lake Provincial Park would be a central location. Others may prefer the comforts of a motel or lodge. The choice is yours.

On Saturday June 5 - meet at the corner of Highway 6 and Dyer's Bay Road at 9 a.m. Bring a lunch and come prepared to spend the day enjoying the amazing variety of wildflowers and ferns that grow on the fabulous Bruce Peninsula. There should be lots of birds too.

Watch for more details in the May 'Wood Duck', and let Dave or Hazel know if you plan to participate.

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING OF THE HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB held on Monday, March 8, 1982, at the Headquarters of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Burlington, 8 p.m.

The members and guests attending this meeting, numbering over a hundred, were welcomed by Betty LeWarne and Evelyn Morris. Before and after the program they were able to see fascinating slides provided by Louise Elder, David Bruton and Edward Ellis.

Hazel Broker, President, introduced Brian Laing, the Education Director of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority, who announced that the Authority's Conservation Award for 1981 had been awarded to the Club and he presented the framed award to Hazel. In doing so, he noted how the Club and the Authority had been partners in Environmental Conservation in the Authority's area, including the contribution of money for purchase of land. Brian hoped that this co-operation would continue in the future. In accepting the award, Hazel Broker thanked the Conservation Authority and also stressed the contribution of Marion Shivas and her Sanctuary Committee for their guidance and for their drive in furthering the Conservation Ethic.

It was announced that the Executive of the Club had decided to sponsor three members to attend Long Point Bird Observatory's program this summer in addition to the three members being sponsored by the Observatory. Each sponsorship to be for one week.

Brian Pomfret, a junior member, has won the Ross Thompson Trophy this year, observing 220 species of birds. The President announced that she personally would sponsor Brian for a week at Long Point Observatory.

David Copeland spoke about the Grimsby Hawk Watchers and brought members up to date with their activities.

The Wood Duck editor, Marvin Grove, would appreciate more articles for the Wood Duck.

It was announced that the Club was contributing $7,500. towards the purchase of a property near Freelton, which is partially wetlands and between the headwaters of the Spencer and Bronte creeks; this land is being purchased by Nature Conservancy, Hamilton and Halton Region Conservation Authorities. Also $2,500. is being given to the Bruce Trail Association to aid in the purchase of an area of Escarpment land in the Cave Springs area.

Hazel Broker asked for volunteers to help her prepare a display of Club activities to be held towards the end of April and she needs photographs of activities of the Club.

Members were encouraged to write letters supporting the proposed new National Park in the Bruce Peninsula; the transfer of Provincial Parks from the Ministry of Natural Resources to the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation; the adoption of the recommendations of the 'Wetlands Discussion Paper' by the Ministry of Natural Resources; Energy Probe's opposition to the sale of power to the U.S.A.

Bruce Duncan announced that Bob Curry will be the Club's representative for the James Baillie Birdathon again this year and asked members to sponsor him. 25% of the money raised will be given to the Club's Sanctuary Fund.

Our speaker for the evening, Dr. Paul Eagles, was introduced by Bill Campbell. Dr. Eagles, a club member, spoke on "Environmentally Sensitive Area Planning in Ontario". He is a professor at Waterloo and previously was involved with the planning of Bronte Creek Provincial Park.

Firstly, with the aid of photographs, we were shown developments which had taken place in the past in sensitive areas, but would not now be allowed.

MINUTES of General Meeting of H.N.C. held Monday March 8,1982 (continued)

Paul discussed criteria for designating Environmentally Sensitive Areas, stressing the importance of having accurate Inventories of such areas in the province. It is essential that these Inventories be in the hands of Provincial Government departments, Regional and local authorities.

It is not always possible to protect everything but every effort must be made to protect the best.

Paul spoke of Environmentally Sensitive areas relatively near Hamilton, concentrating on an upland forest, a field environment, and a wetland.

He raised the question of public ownership of sensitive areas. Sometimes this is essential to preserve an area but private ownership can be just as effective if the owner is aware of, and is in favour of, preserving the biota of his land.

The question of rehabilitation of damaged areas was referred to, including gravel pits. Natural regeneration of a gravel pit is being monitored in one area.

David Copeland proposed a vote of thanks. Paul's talk had been most informative and given members an insight into the business side of being a Naturalist.

After the meeting, members were able to see the Canadian Nature Federation's touring exhibition of 'Canadian Nature Art' in the library of the R.B.G., and to have coffee and doughnuts provided by Shirley Klement, Edith Lawrence and Charlie Zimmerman.

Barbara Reid, Secretary.

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## NEW MEMBERS

Tema Klein, 817 Glenwood Ave., Burlington,Ontario L7T 2J8

Alice Unwin, 514 - 181 Jackson St.W., Hamilton,Ontario L8P 1L8

Jean and Larry Martin, Janet Martin, Paul Martin,
2038 Saxon Road, Oakville, Ontario L6L 2V2

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## PERSONAL WAIVER FORM RELATING TO FIELD EVENTS

In order to protect you,the Hamilton Naturalists' Club and the leaders of the outdoor activities of our club, your executive consulted John G. Lange, Q.C. who is the Club's legal counsel as to suitable procedure.

On his advice, participants on future Field Events will be required to sign the following "Field Event - Application Form".

"In making this application I affirm that I am in general good health,capable of performing the required exercise to participate and that I accept as my personal risk the hazards of such participation, and will not hold Hamilton Naturalists' Club responsible."
In consideration of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club accepting my application, I hearby release and forever discharge Hamilton Naturalists' Club, its Officers, Directors, Servants and Agents from any liability whatsoever arising as a result of my participation in this Field Event and I declare that this release is binding upon me, my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns."

If the applicant is under 18 years of age the parent or guardian should sign for that person and indicate the guardianship authority. The Field Event - Application Form will be presented by the leader at the beginning of each Field Event. (Reprint from May 1981 - Wood Duck)

Ed Ellis, Field Events, Director.

APRIL/MAY/82 CLUB FIELD EVENTS APRIL/MAY/82

SUNDAY, APRIL 4,1982 - "WORKSHOP AT SHORT HILLS WILDERNESS AREA"

Please plan to attend and bring pruning shears,loppers, hand saws, axes, etc. with which to clear trails. Ribbons will be provided to mark trails.

Meet at Eastgate Shopping Plaza, Queenston Rd., & Centennial Drive, Southeast corner of parking lot at 8:30 a.m. or plan to be at the front of the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m.

Marion Shivas-Sanctuary Director) Dundas 628-6846

SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 1982 8:30 a.m.- "SPRING HAWK WATCH"

Learn to identify these birds of prey on their northern migration. Meet at Beamer Point.

Leader: George Meyers 1-945-4217

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 1982 - 9:00 a.m. "WAINFLEET BOG"

Rattle around the bog with George. This is a unique area in southern Ontario. Meet at Bartlett Road exit off east bound Q.E.W.(East Grimsby). Bring lunch.

Leader: George Meyers 1-945-4217

SUNDAY, MAY 10,1982 8:00 a.m. to noon "BEGINNER BIRD HIKE"

At Christie Outdoor Education Centre. Our first Beginner's Hike was a great success; so we will be having another hike to help us identify the warblers and other bird species. Bird Field Guides and Binoculars will be supplied for those who require them. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the University Plaza Parking Lot in Dundas(next to Miracle Mart)

Leader: John Heaslip 627-3280

SATURDAY, MAY 15, 1982 at 8:30 a.m. - "SHORT HILLS"

See the Short Hills bloom this spring. Bring a friend to our Sanctuary. Meet at Mountain Plaza, Fennel & Upper James in Hamilton. Bring lunch.

Leader: Ian & Barbara Reid 628-8329

SUNDAY, MAY 30, 1982 - 8:30 a.m. - "FLOWERS AT SPOOKY HOLLOW"

Explore our own Sanctuary in Norfolk County in Spring. Bring a lunch. Meet at Mountain Plaza, Fennel & Upper James in Hamilton where we will form a car pool and meet our leader.

Leader: Bruce Duncan Caledonia 1-765-3322

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MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING

| | |
|---|---|
| Time | TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 1982 at 8 p.m. |
| Place | Royal Botanical Gardens Headquarters<br>680 Plains Road,Burlington(Centre Auditorium) |
| Speaker | "BIRD CONTROL AT AIRPORTS"<br>Red Mason of Etobicoke will present the facts on this controversial subject. |
| Next Meeting | Monday, May 10, 1982. |

VISITORS WELCOME STAY FOR FELLOWSHIP & REFRESHMENTS

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## THE FIRST FUCHSIA IN EUROPE

Writing about fifty years ago, Frances Margaret Fox told in her book "Flowers and Their Travels" how the fuchsia came to England. She wrote:

> More than a hundred years ago there was a wonderful nursery garden near Kensington, in England. The rarest plants in the world were there. One morning, the owner of the garden, James Lee, took a visitor around and showed him all his rare flowers; he told him what their names were and how they first were brought to England. At last the visitor said to the gardener:
>
> "I saw a wonderful plant flowering in a cottage window at Wapping the other day, with drooping crimson flowers, and buds like coral eardrops. I have seen nothing so wonderful in your gardens today."
>
> This so surprised Mr. Lee that he made up his mind to see that flower, so he went walking until he found it.
>
> Sure enough, in the window of a cottage at wapping, the great lover of flowers saw a fuchsia for the first time. He was overjoyed at the sight of the strange, beautiful blossom, and rapped at the cottage door. the owner of the exotic flower invited him in. She told the stranger that her son Jack was a sailor and had brought tha plant to her from South America.
>
> At first the woman would not think of parting with her plant and refused to sell it at any price. Her boy had cared for it for months at sea because he knew that his mother loved flowers. She said that it was her"keep-sake", and, poor as she was, she would not sell it.
>
> The gardener talked with the woman for a long while and promised to bring her plant safely back after he had started some slips from it. At last Jack's mother loaned to Mr. Lee the first fuchsia ever seen in England or in Europe.
>
> Then and there the honest nurseryman empied his pockets and gave the woman all the money he had in them at the time, which perhaps was about fifty dollars. Then away he went with Jack's keepsake.
>
> The Kensington gardener had no trouble in starting slips from the fuchsia. Every little slip grew of its own and so became a new plant. Then true to his word he returned the first fuchsia plant to the cottage home of Jack's mother at Wapping.

(submitted by Dr. Louise Elder)

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## CELEBRATE ONTARIO'S NATURE

### and begin the F.O.N.'s next 50 years

Don't miss the Federation of Ontario Naturalists Annual General Meeting hosted by the Kingston Field Naturalists.

Queen's University at Kingston
1982, May 28-30

Speakers and Banquet, Juniors programme, Photo Salon and Field Trips. For additional information contact: P.T.(Pip) Nation, 7 Wellington Street, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3B7.

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January 11, 1982

ADDENDUM TO POLICY GUIDELINE DATED 1977, RESPECTING CLUB-OWNED NATURE RESERVES
SPOOKY HOLLOW and SHORT HILLS

NATURE RESERVES

Acquisition of wildlife sanctuaries (nature reserves) is one of the objects of our Club, as set out in Letters Patent dated 1959. The club-owned properties were selected because they represent certain land forms and have a distinctive content of plants and animals. With the threat to our natural heritage in Southern Ontario, these two 'remnant' woodlots are priceless assets. (Spooky Hollow is designated as a "Provincially Significant Natural Area" in the Official Plan of the Haldimand-Norfolk Region.)

RULES AND REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO THESE PROPERTIES

General Remarks

The properties were purchased and are maintained for EDUCATION and TRANQUIL RELAXATION. They are NOT - nor were they ever intended to be - MULTI-USE PARK AREAS.

Rules

(a) Access points are to be kept to an absolute minimum. Maps of each property will indicate ENTRY points, and trails will emanate from within the properties as much as possible.
(b) Visitors are asked to keep to the trails unless they are doing research or survey work sponsored by the Board.
(c) No picking, removal or disturbance of plants or animals is to be done.
(d) No Fishing, Camping, Trail-biking, Motorcycling, Horseback Riding, or skidooing, is permissible.
(e) No fires are allowed.
(f) We prefer that dogs not be taken into the properties. If they are taken in, they should be on a leash.

"No trespassing" signs posted in adjacent properties should be obeyed at all times.

OUR NATURE RESERVES MUST BE KEPT INTACT AND AS LEAST DISTURBED AS POSSIBLE. WE ARE DEDICATED TO MAINTAINING THEM FOR SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION AND PASSIVE ENJOYMENT OF THEIR BIOTA.

POSTING OF PROPERTIES AND ENFORCEMENT OF RULES

Posting

Perimeter trees on both properties bear red splotches. This means that the properties should not be entered without permission and is in accordance with government suggestions for protection of properties.

Club Members automatically have permission to enter and it is their responsibility to challenge any misdemeanor on the part of the public.

e.g. Fishermen should be requested to leave.
Trail Bikers or Motorcyclists should be challenged. If they have licence plates, the numbers should be recorded and relayed to the Sanctuary Director. However, Members or visitors should not get into a verbal or physical hassle with anyone. All incidents and encounters should be relayed to the Sanctuary Director who will pass the information on to the Board of Directors.

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Metal "Wildlife Refuge" signs, indicating the Club's ownership have been erected, as well as yellow indicator signs meaning "no motorcycles" and "no skidoos". It is extremely difficult to have these remain in position. They are expensive to buy today, and with the small inventory we have, we are endeavouring to be as discriminatory as possible in erecting them.

CLUB OUTINGS and WORKSHOPS

OUTINGS

The Sanctuary Committee will schedule Spring and Fall club group outings to each reserve, giving this information to the Field Events Director early each season. For instance, they will give Fall outing dates for the current year, and Spring outing dates for the following year, for inclusion in the Club calendar of Events, printed in August of each year.

WORKSHOPS

The Sanctuary Committee will also set up dates for a Spring Workshop at Short Hills - and one at Spooky Hollow in the Fall of each year.

Maintenance done will be kept to a minimum, and a good announcement in The Wood Duck magazine (well in advance of the date of the workshop), stressing that many helping hands in attendance to do some "housekeeping" on the trails, make small necessary repairs, mark trails with red ribbon, etc., results in a comparatively few hours' work at each workshop.

GROUP OUTINGS (other than Hamilton Naturalists' Club sponsorship)

Groups wishing to schedule visits to our club-owned properties, are requested to seek permission from the Board to do so. Applications should be addressed to -

Hamilton Naturalists' Club,
P. O. Box 5182,
HAMILTON, Ontario L8S 4L3

and sent well in advance of a proposed visit. Name of Leader(s), number of visitors, date, time, etc., should be supplied.

CONTENT OF FLORA AND FAUNA IN EACH PROPERTY

Both properties have recently been professionally surveyed, and this, plus submission from interested persons over the years, makes it possible to shortly publish this information.

After this data is available in printed form, discovery of any additions to the flora or fauna should be submitted to the Sanctuary Director.

SANCTUARY COMMITTEE: Mr. Jeff Blezius
Dr. Paul Eagles
Mr. Edw. Ellis
Mr. Dave Bruton
Mr. Bruce Duncan
Mr. Robert Elstone
Mr. Rick Seeley
Mrs. Marion Shivas, Sanctuary Director.

OFFICIALLY adopted by the Board of Directors at Meeting of March 3, 1982, and so recorded in the Minutes.

"Hazel Broker", President.

## WINTER HIKES 1982

by Hazel Broker

January 16 - Because of strong, cold winds and ominous storm warnings only three of us met for the trip to Spooky Hollow and then decided the long drive in such weather would be foolish. However, after making the effort to be at the Mountain Plaza at 8:30 a.m. we weren't ready to turn homeward but headed for R.B.G.'s Hendrie Valley instead and enjoyed a delightful morning hiking the sheltered trails. Few birds were sighted. Chickadees proved to be the most common. Crows, a White-breasted Nuthatch and Downy Woodpeckers, one working on trailing wild grape vines were also seen. Blue Jays and a Cardinal were heard and we stopped for some time to watch a Brown Creeper work its way from the bottom up some eight feet of the trunk of a tree and then fly to the bottom of the next tree and repeat tje ½rocess. This bird was still working in the same area an hour or so later when we retraced our steps on the homeward track.

Identification of trees and shrubs commanded much of our attention and a few well-placed identification markers verified our deductions. We were amazed to see so much black oak on the south facing slopes and finding red oak, black oak and white oak in close proximity was great for comparison. Sulphur-coloured buds on the bitternut hickory made identification of that species easy. Finding eastern cottonwood made our day. Thanks Bruce Mackenzie for your leader-ship.

January 30 - Again the weather was unco-operative and Mary and Norm Pomfret found only one participant waiting at the Children's Garden for a walk along the South Shore trails of the R.B.G. Not undaunted by warnings of more rain and snow a good walk was enjoyed. Chickadees were the only birds sighted - an indication perhaps, that the birds knew of the heavy snowstorm that was on its way. Thanks to the Pomfrets for carrying on under adverse conditions.

February 27 - It was still quite dark at 6 a.m. when 15 cars and some 30 people gathered at Dominion Plaza in Ancaster to go owl prowling with John Olmstead.

First stop was Sulphur Springs Valley but a hike up the road to the tracks and along the tracks to the Trail Centre and beyond proved unsuccessful in our search for Great Horned and Screech Owls. There was no owl response to John's calls. At sunrise we were standing atop a high knoll with an excellent view to the east down the valley towards Hamilton. A beautiful morning and it was great just to be out. Crows and then the chip of a Tree Sparrow were the first voices heard followed by a Cardinal and later the call of a Blue Jay. A White-breasted Nuthatch was sighted as we headed back through the woods to the cars but few birds were in evidence-the pattern, it seems, for this winter.

Next stop was Mount Hope airport and here we did see owls, five Short-eared in all, and had the opportunity to observe them flying and perched. Horned lark, Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks were also seen along the air-port runways.

A trip to a planting of pines at the corner of Bronte and the Upper Middle Roads proved unfruitful for owls. Snow cover was still two feet or more deep but walking proved easy on the thick crust. Deer tracks and human footprints indicated how difficult walking through the deep snow must have been before the crust formed. We found many places among the pines where the deer had been lying down. Chickadees and Darkeyed Juncoes were our only sightings here.

Our final stop was the Hopkins Tract of the R.B.G. off York Road. A hunt through the pine plantings finally produced one Long-earned Owl. Ruffed Grouse, Brown Creeper, Common Redpolls, House Sparrows and Foldinches in beautiful olive-yellow plumage were added to the day's list. Bird sightings may have been few but everyone enjoyed getting out for a hike on a perfect winter's morning. Thank you John.

Winter Hikes 1982 (continued)

March 7 - Seventeen of us met with John Heaslip at the Hamilton Board of Education's Christie Outdoor Education Centre for some instruction in bird identification. We were told that size, shape, type of beak, wing shape in flight and main body colour were the first features to observe. Then tail markings and finally special markings e.g. around the eye, on the breast and on wings should be noted. Flight patterns are important identification features too.

As on our other winter outings this year, the birds proved to be scarce when we went out along the trails to test our newly-learned skills but it was a beautiful sunny morning with no wind, just perfect for hiking. A fresh fall of snow hiding the icy patches made footing precarious at times but provided an excellent opportunity to examine animal tracks. John pointed out that rabbits and squirrels tend to move in a leap-frog fashion with hind legs passing the front legs at each bound, so that the prints in the forward position are really those of the back feet. Examining the tracks of a red fox we discovered that the front and back print are superimposed one on the other. The highlight of the day for some was the sighting of a Least Weasel as it crossed the trail ahead.

Bird sightings were House Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Cardinal,Dark-eyed Junco, Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker(both m & f) Red-tailed Hawk,Mallard Duck and Canada Geese. Thank you John for an excellent lesson.

On May 9th John is planning a similar outing. Warblers should be back to test our skills. We will be back to learn more.

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IMPORTANT CHANGE IN BIRD STUDY NIGHT CLASS AT SHERIDAN COLLEGE, TRAFALGAR ROAD CAMPUS, OAKVILLE

In response to many requests over the years, it has been decided to extend the bird study courses over two semesters, rather than only the Fall semester as previously.

Starting in September 1982, Rosemary Gaymer will teach BIRD STUDY 1 (beginner to intermediat) for a total of 24 weeks, two and a half hours each Wednesday night, with about a month's break over Christmas and New Year. There will be several field trips each semester.

In the following year, starting September 1983, the more advanced course, BIRD STUDY 11, will be lengthened in the same manner. Thereafter, the courses will be given in alternate years.

There will be a great deal of new material, new observation games and different types of workshops.

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THE COLLATORS FOR THE MARCH ISSUE WERE:

KEN JONES, BARRY CHERRIER, DAVE COPELAND, JILL HARRIS, JOAN FORBES, JIM STOLLARD.

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THE COLLATORS FOR THE FEBRUARY ISSUE WERE:

PHYLLIS VAIR, CLOE EARLE, BETTY LE WARNE, JANE LE WARNE, JOAN FORBES.

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OUR THANKS TO ALL THESE PEOPLE.

# 1982 SPRING WATCH

by Ron Hepworth

Now that March 10 is past and the world is still intact we can look forward to another spring season although it is developing somewhat later than normal this year.

While waiting out those cold and snowy winter days in anticipation of spring's debut, it is interesting to speculate how late can a spring be or how early. In fact I have taken a brief look at the climatic record for Hamilton going back to 1866.

With the aid of a few calculations it is easy to show that those old fashion winters were generally colder and often longer than todays. The coldest period seems to have bottomed around 1880-1890 when the 10-year mean winter temperature (2 coldest months) was -5.8°C. A gradual warming trend took place after about 1900 reaching a peak in the period 1948-58 at a mean of -3.6°C. According to the climatologists this may have been the warmest period in the last 1000 years. We have been on the down trend since with the 10-year mean presently at about -4.2°C and still dropping.

This cycle is also evident when you look at the total number of days below freezing. The period 1948-58 averaged a total of 38 days below freezing whereas the period from 1880 to 1920 averaged about 52 days which is also the present average. The severity of our winters can also be gauged by looking at the total number of days below -17.8°C (0°F). In 1880-90 the average number was 10.7 days dropping to a minimum of 2.6 during the period 1948-58 and presently back up to 4.5 days.

But what about spring? The coming of spring has tended to be extremely variable over the years. Whether there are any particular trends has yet to be determined. However, with the aid of a few calculations it appears that some of the latest spring seasons were experienced in 1885, 1926 and 1940. For example, it is probable that the first Hepatica and American Elm were just beginning to bloom around Apr. 25-30. The present normal is about Apr. 7. Similarly, the first forsythia and dandelions probably did not appear until about May 10.

At the other end of the scale there were a few extremely early seasons indicated in 1945, 1946, 1911 and 1922. In these years, the Hepatica and Amer. Elm probably bloomed as early as March 25 with forsythia following about April 1-5 and dandelions about April 15. Actual published records are hard to come by but perhaps some of our senior naturalists could verify some of these extreme seasons.

There have also been a number of very mild winters, notably 1870, 1878, 1882, 1890 and 1953 in which spring growth may have begun rather early. One particular note of interest comes from an old undated newspaper clipping commenting on some of the mild extremes of past centuries.

"In connection with the unusual mild weather that has characterized the earlier part of the present winter in Canada, the following extract from the Pall Mall Gazette (Eng.) where the weather has been equally erratic, will be of interest:- "The mildness of the present season bears no comparison to that of some winters 'long gone by,' In 1172 the temperature was so high that leaves came out on the trees in January, and birds hatched their broods in February. In 1289 the winter was equally mild, and the maidens of Cologne wore wreaths of violets and corn flowers at Christmas. In 1421 the trees flowered in March, and the vines in April. Cherries ripened in the same month; and grapes appeared in May. In 1575 the trees were covered with leaves in January, and birds hatched their young in February; in 1584 the same thing was repeated, and it was added that corn was in ear at Easter. There was in France neither snow nor frost throughout the winters of 1538, 1607, 1609, 1617 and 1659; finally in 1662, even in the north of Germany, stoves were not lighted, and trees flowered in February."

What can we expect for this spring? The long range weather predictions indicate that April may be on the warm side except for the first few days. If this be so, then spring which has been 9-12 days late through most of March will gradually recover to near normal by end of April. Look for hepatica by second week of April.

# MAITLAND RIVER BIRD OBSERVATORY

by John B. Miles

In the summer of 1975 we purchased a small parcel of land(approximately 2½-3 acres) near Wingham, Ontario on the Maitland River. The property is mainly white cedar and hemlock about 20 feet high with lots of undergrowth. A good habitat for banding birds with mist nets.

In September of 1975 construction of a banding station building commenced. The banding building is 14'x30' and was modelled after the cabin at area 2 of the Long point Bird Observatory.

The property is shaped like a triangle. The north side is about 250' the west side is a little over 600' and the Maitland River flowing from the N.E. to the S.W. completes the triangle. The river frontage is a little over 850'. The river valley is about a 100 ft. lower than the surrounding farm land and since the property is located on the North-West side of the river enjoys a southerly exposure and is sheltered from the wind.

On sunny cool windy days in the spring and fall, day time temperatures in the valley can be 50 degrees warmer than surrounding farm areas and the nearby town of Wingham. Conversely, calm cool clear nights can produce white frosts in exposed open areas of the valley.

Several flora species normally found further south are found along the river bank. These include Blue Beech with the trunks of some specimens 10"-12" in diameter, hackberry and Twinleaf. The twinleaf is probably the most northerly stand in the province with nearly 5,000 plants between our property and the adjoining property. At least four species of plants on Argus and White's list of rare plants of Ontario (76 & 77) or the Ontario version of the list of rare Canadian plants by Hershaw, Morton & Venn (76) have been found on the property. These are Lizards Tail(Saururus), Indian plantain(C.tuberosa),Hypericuicum multilum, and twinleaf. A partial list of the least common trees, shrubs and plants found on the property by Joe Johnson of Wiarton is enclosed as an appendix to this article. Since Joe has visited the property only twice, once in mid May and once in late August the list is by no means complete.

Bird banding has been carried out at the station for 6½ seasons. The fall of 1975 and the spring, summer and fall of 1976 to 1981. During this period 11,811 birds of 113 species plus one sub species plus one hybrid have been banded. Trapping is done with mist nets and one Jay trap. Hummingbirds are not usually banded in Ontario. Hummingbird bands are not normally available except for special projects. Federal bird bands are no longer used on non-migratory game birds, consequently Ruffed Grouse are no longer banded nor are hummingbirds.

Several of the more southerly birds have been banded on the property. Highlights include 2 Louisiana Waterthrushs, White-eyed Vireo, an immature Prothonotary Warbler in August 1981, and an immature Blue Grey Gnatcatcher in August 1979. (One was sighted in the spring of 1976). A male Red-bellied Woodpecker was coming to the stations bird feeders on December 31,1981 and January 1, 1982.

While the previous discussed species are good records from most parts of Southern Ontario the fact that the banding station is less than 5 miles from Bruce County and over 30 miles inland from the Great Lakes off any major migration path makes these records more interesting.

The Maitland River is the major drainage system in Huron County with a drainage basin of over 2,500 sq. miles. Three major branches meet at Wingham, some 5 miles upstream from the banding station. The north branch raises east of Harriston, the middle branch flows through Listowel and the southerly branch

Maitland River Bird Observatory(continued)
raises near Milverton. Most of the river courses is through farm land with no storage reservoirs at present except for the occasional old mill pond. Consequently there is a great variation in water flow. In summer the narrow rapids can be 50-60 feet wide with the water ankle deep between long quiet pools. In spring the same area may be under 20-25 feet of water and the river will be 200 to 300 feet wide. Even 3 to 4 days of continuous heavy rains can produce severe summer floods.

These sudden floods have created problems over the years for the banding equipment that is on the river gravel bars to catch Blackbirds and shorebirds. What is dry ground one day may be waist deep the next.

Across the river from our property is a major gravel bar covered with small willows and Joe-Pye-Weed. From late July to early October depending upon the river levels this bar is used as a Blackbird roosting area. Some years over 15,000 birds will use it in a single night, other times only a few hundred. Nets placed on the gravel bar on our side have been fairly productive in catching low flying flocks heading into the roost in the late evening over the years. In 1975 a severe flood in late August completely flooded the roosting area forcing the birds to go elsewhere. During 1981 very few birds used the roost resulting in a poor catch. 1977 to 1980 have been the best for Blackbirds with the result that 1,051 Redwinged Blackbirds have been banded at the station which is 9% of the total birds banded. As a family blackbirds represent 14.6% of the total number of birds banded at MRBO; Warblers 3,217(27.2%) and Sparrows 2,446(20.7%) are the other major families caught.

Ospreys frequent the river in the spring and late summer on a regular basis. An adult Golden Eagle was observed along the river from the property on January 1,1982. The Wood Duck is the common breeding duck in the River valley. Even a Boreal Chickadee was observed moving through the valley last fall. All in all, nearly 170 species have been either banded on, seen in, over or around the property.

When banding small non game birds, recoveries average one in 10,000. So far only 3 recoveries have been received. One recovery as a game bird, a Woodcock shot within 10 miles of the banding station. The other two are more interesting:- Redwinged Blackbird-banded May 13,1978-recovered May 5,1979 Bowmanville, Ontario
- Catbird - banded May 19, 1979 - recovered July 1979 near Port Hope, Ontario

So far there have been two foreign retraps at the Station.
- Song Sparrow - banded April 19, 1978 at Long Point-retrapped April 13, 1980
- Tree Swallow (nestling) - banded July 20, 1980 near Guelph-retrapped May 10, 1981

While 2 recoveries and 2 foreign retraps are not enough data to draw conclusions from,it is interesting that both recoveries were to the east in Central Ontario within 25 miles of each other, yet for the foreign station recoveries both went north and west to the retrap point

## BIRDS BANDED AT MAITLAND RIVER BIRD OBSERVATORY

| | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Green Winged Teal | | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Sharp Shinned Hawk | 2 | | 2 | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| Ruffed Grouse | 1 | 4 | 4 | * | * | * | * | 9 |
| Sora Rail | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Killdeer | | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | | 4 |
| Am.Woodcock | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 4 | 1 | 9 |
| Common Snipe | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Spotted Sandpiper | | 1 | 10 | 19 | 12 | 20 | 9 | 71 |
| Herring Gull | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Mourning Dove | | | 1 | | | | 9 | 10 |
| Yellow Billed Cuckoo | | 2 | | 1 | | | | 3 |
| Black Billed Cuckoo | 1 | 1 | 4 | 10 | | 5 | 2 | 23 |
| Screech Owl | | 2 | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Saw-Whet Owl | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Ruby-throated Hummingbird | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| Belted Kingfisher | | 8 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 13 | 15 | 51 |
| Yellow Shafted Flicker | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 24 |
| Pileated Woodpecker | | 3 | | | | | | 3 |
| Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 4 | 4 | 27 |
| Hairy Woodpecker | 2 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 45 |
| Downy Woodpecker | 3 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 11 | 49 |
| Eastern Kingbird | | 9 | | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 29 |
| Great Crested Flycatcher | | 24 | 19 | 15 | 19 | 15 | 7 | 99 |
| Eastern Phoebe | 3 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 31 |
| Yellow Bellied Flycatcher | 1 | 5 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 11 | 47 |
| Traill's Flycatcher | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 11 |
| Least Flycatcher | 1 | 26 | 13 | 8 | 13 | 8 | 6 | 75 |
| E.Wood Pewee | 10 | 29 | 19 | 31 | 21 | 21 | 20 | 151 |
| Olive Sided Flycatcher | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| Tree Swallo | | 1 | 11 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 34 |
| Bank Swallow | | 4 | 13 | | 3 | 10 | 5 | 35 |
| Rough Winged Swallow | | 4 | 33 | 1 | 5 | 21 | 4 | 68 |
| Cliff Swallow | | | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| Blue Jay | 7 | 17 | 13 | 38 | 16 | 24 | 18 | 133 |
| Black Capped Chickadee | 55 | 28 | 45 | 30 | 52 | 115 | 110 | 435 |
| White Breasted Nuthatch | 7 | 14 | 6 | 12 | 9 | 11 | 14 | 73 |
| Red Breasted Nuthatch | 2 | | 8 | 3 | | 5 | 2 | 20 |
| Brown Creeper | 13 | 19 | 27 | 29 | 17 | 33 | 26 | 164 |
| House Wren | 1 | 10 | 5 | 19 | 25 | 23 | 19 | 102 |
| Winter Wren | 3 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 34 |
| Cat Bird | 6 | 57 | 57 | 56 | 53 | 50 | 32 | 311 |
| Brown Thrasher | | 1 | 3 | 1 | | 2 | | 7 |

## BIRDS BANDED AT MAITLAND RIVER BIRD OBSERVATORY

| | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Robin | 1 | 35 | 36 | 26 | 23 | 24 | 31 | 176 |
| Wood Thrush | 4 | 10 | 5 | 16 | 12 | 21 | 10 | 78 |
| Hermit Thrush | 9 | 11 | 8 | 9 | 16 | 24 | 12 | 89 |
| Swainson Thrush | 66 | 95 | 87 | 88 | 72 | 73 | 60 | 541 |
| Gray Cheeked Thrush | 18 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 47 |
| Veery | 1 | 11 | 17 | 12 | 15 | 21 | 13 | 90 |
| Blue Grey Gnatcatcher | | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Golden Crowned Kinglet | 32 | 17 | 6 | 14 | 17 | 100 | 38 | 224 |
| Ruby Crowned Kinglet | 35 | 20 | 19 | 24 | 33 | 54 | 21 | 206 |
| Cedar Waxwing | | 77 | 27 | 89 | 45 | 49 | 41 | 328 |
| Starling | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | | 7 |
| White Eyed Vireo | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Yellow Throated Vireo | | | | 1 | 3 | | | 4 |
| Solitary Vireo | 5 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 4 | | 2 | 21 |
| Red Eyed Vireo | 15 | 38 | 23 | 36 | 34 | 21 | 17 | 184 |
| Philadelphia Vireo | 5 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 1 | | 35 |
| Warbling Vireo | | 13 | | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 25 |
| Black & White Warbler | 4 | 13 | 10 | 9 | 12 | 7 | 19 | 74 |
| Prothonotary Warbler | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Golden Winged Warbler | | 2 | | 1 | | | | 3 |
| Blue Winged Warbler | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Brewsters Warbler | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Tennessee Warbler | 14 | 60 | 27 | 138 | 57 | 77 | 69 | 442 |
| Orange Crowned Warbler | 4 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 17 |
| Nashville Warbler | 12 | 7 | 12 | 39 | 18 | 33 | 27 | 117 |
| Parula Warbler | | | | | 1 | 2 | | 3 |
| Yellow Warbler | | 7 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 4 | | 25 |
| Magnolia Warbler | 19 | 48 | 45 | 49 | 28 | 39 | 50 | 278 |
| Cape May Warbler | | 40 | 4 | 37 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 96 |
| Black Throated Blue Warbler | 1 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 34 |
| Myrtle Warbler | 55 | 41 | 65 | 199 | 51 | 75 | 22 | 508 |
| Black Throated Green Warbler | 4 | 24 | 11 | 33 | 14 | 15 | 5 | 106 |
| Blackburnian Warbler | 4 | 24 | 5 | 29 | 9 | 11 | 18 | 106 |
| Chestnut-sided Warbler | 3 | 7 | 6 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 20 | 66 |
| Bat-breated Warbler | 42 | 94 | 83 | 171 | 113 | 100 | 131 | 734 |
| Black-Polled Warbler | 9 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 48 |
| Palm Warbler | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 5 | 2 | 10 |
| Ovenbird | 6 | 23 | 19 | 26 | 24 | 28 | 35 | 161 |
| Northern Waterthrush | 2 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 60 |
| Louisiana Waterthrush | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 |
| Mourning Warbler | 2 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 12 | 20 | 58 |
| Yellow Throat | 5 | 15 | 5 | 9 | 15 | 12 | 4 | 65 |
| Wilson's Warbler | | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 24 |
| Canada Warbler | 1 | 15 | 21 | 14 | 21 | 10 | 38 | 120 |
| American Redstart | | 9 | 2 | 18 | 16 | 5 | 7 | 57 |
| House Sparrow | | | 4 | | | 1 | | 5 |
| Bobolink | | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Redwinged Blackbird | | 58 | 253 | 245 | 184 | 241 | 70 | 1,051 |
| Baltimore Oriole | | 67 | 32 | 68 | 45 | 45 | 46 | 303 |
| Rusty Blackbird | | | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| Common Grackle | | 12 | 41 | 29 | 10 | 12 | 37 | 141 |
| Brown-Headed Cowbird | | 54 | 82 | 38 | 18 | 23 | 13 | 228 |

## BIRDS BANDED AT MAITLAND RIVER BIRD OBSERVATORY

| | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scarlet Tanager | 1 | 20 | 10 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 46 |
| Cardinal | | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 22 |
| Rose-Breasted Grosbeak | 7 | 59 | 97 | 102 | 92 | 120 | 85 | 562 |
| Indigo Bunting | | 4 | 2 | 9 | 13 | 10 | 6 | 44 |
| Evening Grosbeak | | | | | | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Purple Finch | 1 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 27 |
| Common Redpoll | | | | 30 | | | 1 | 31 |
| American Goldfinch | 3 | 59 | 27 | 9 | 17 | 14 | 24 | 153 |
| Rufous-Sided Towhee | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Savannah Sparrow | | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | | 13 |
| Slate-Colored Junco | 3 | 42 | 74 | 88 | 54 | 91 | 173 | 525 |
| Tree Sparrow | | 15 | 63 | 12 | 21 | 48 | 30 | 189 |
| Chipping Sparrow | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Field Sparrow | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 2 |
| White-Crowned Sparrow | | 8 | 3 | 7 | | 1 | 9 | 28 |
| Gamble's White-Cr.Sparrow | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| White-Throated Sparrow | 8 | 40 | 88 | 36 | 62 | 91 | 36 | 361 |
| Fox Sparrow | | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| Lincoln's Sparrow | 2 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 30 |
| Swamp Sparrow | 1 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 3 | 39 |
| Song Sparrow | 9 | 88 | 65 | 62 | 39 | 77 | 63 | 403 |
| TOTAL SPECIES | 55 | 90 | 89 + 1 subspecies | 87 | 87 | 92 + 1 hybrid | 92 +1subspecie | 113 +1 Hybri |
| TOTAL INDIVIDUALS | 540 | 1,678 | 1,795 | 2,273 | 1,614 | 2,155 | 1,756 | 11,811 |

SPECIES MARKED * HANDLED BUT NOT BANDED

## PARTIAL LIST OF PLANTS FOUND ON THE PREMISES OF MAITLAND RIVER BIRD OBSERVATORY

Great Lobelia
Goldenrods: Solidago Graminifolia (narrow-leaved g.)
S. Rugoas (rough G.)
S. canadensis (Canada g.)
S. flexicaulis (zigzag g.)
S. gigantea
Asters: Aster nova-angliae (New England a.)
A. lateriflorus (calico a.)
A. puniceus (purple-stemmed a.)
A. simplex
sneezeweed
boneset
spotted Joe-Pye-weed( E.maculatum)
black-eyed Susan (R. Serotina)
ferns: marsh
bulblet
lady
sensitive
royal
cinnamon
silvery spleenwort (Athyrium thelypteroides)
water horehound (L. americanus)

(continued in next issue)

## THICK -BILLED MURRE

by George W. North

The Thick-billed or Bruennich's Murre is a relative of the extinct Great Auk, the original Penguin. It is an oceanic bird of cold northern seas. In eastern Canada it nests in large colonies, usually on precipitous sea-cliffs, from the high arctic to the island of Newfoundland. At the southern edge of its breeding range, as at Gaspe and Cape Breton, it is replaced by the Common Murre, with a longer more sharply pointed bill.

On fresh water the occurence of the Thick-billed Murre is fortuitous. In the late fall at intervals of many years it makes excursions up the St. Lawrence, sometimes as far as Lake Ontario, occasionally in large numbers. One such autumn flight occurred one year in the forties when Oliver Hewitt saw some at La Salle Park; this was probably the time when the specimen in the A. B. Smith collection was taken. The only big fall invasion I have seen was in 1950. On November 26, 1950, there was a terrific easterly gale at Hamilton. On stopping my bicycle for a few moments at the foot of Bay Street I saw a Laughing Gull and a Kittiwake fly by on the wind. So in Toronto on November 28th I suggested to Bill Gunn that we drive along the west shore of Lake Ontario to see if any other oceanic birds had been blown in by the storm. After noon on our first stop at Humber Bay there were small flocks of black and white birds flying westerly far out over the lake but we paid little heed as Oldsquaws were always out there at that season in large numbers. At Port Credit we were delighted to see a Thick-billed Murre on the water close to shore. We noted all the salient features including the light line along the gape. At Lorne Park we were amazed to see flocks of Thick-billed Murres flying south-westerly along the shore; some even flew overhead in V formation like geese. Continuing along the Lakeshore we kept seeing more Murres till at Bronte we had counted 140; probably many times that number had flown by that day. At Bronte [illegible] the flocks changed direction and headed across the lake towards Grimsby to make a short-cut across the end of the lake. We presumed they kept flying easterly along the south shore of Lake Ontario as none was reported at Niagara Falls. I also saw a Thick-billed Murre on December 1 and five on December 3, 1950. The only other time I have seen this bird at that season was on December 21, 1952, an adult in summer plumage on the Bay at the foot of Parkdale Avenue. Ray Lowes found the remains of an immature that same day on the lake shore at Lakeside Beach.

Most surprising is the occurrence of the Thick-billed Murre on Lake Ontario for at least seven consecutive summers. I lived at Van Wagner's Beach in the summer for over twenty-five years, often from May to November, and kept a sharp lookout over the lake for birds. The Thick-billed Murre seemed always to appear first on a day when the weather was hot, with south or south-west winds. Any Hamiltonian who has tried to swim in the lake under such conditions knows how cold the water can be; this may be an attraction for the Murres. The following is a list of my summer sightings together with the number of Murres seen--1933: July 1, 2, July 3, 1; July 4, 1; July 12, 3; July 19, 1; July 23, 1. 1934: July 2, 2. 1935: July 3, 1; July 10, 1; Aug. 7, 1. 1936: July 14, 1; Aug. 5, 1. 1937: June 30, 1. 1938: 1 seen by my good Toronto friend the late Bob Wright close to shore at Vineland. 1939: Aug. 13, 1. 1940: July 28, 1. 1944: Aug. 16, 1. On sunday August 13, 1939, I was showing some of my London birding friends around some of my shorebird spots around Hamilton namely Ed and Margaret McKone, Mel Dale and W. E. Saunders, when W. E. suggested in Westdale Park that I show them one of my Bruennich's Murres. I had not seen any that year, but I suggested a likely spot might be the Brant Inn. Imagine our astonishment when we stopped at the top of the bank beside the Brant Inn to see an adult Thick-billed Murre directly below us in the water!

# THE AMAZING GROUNDHOG

by Dan Strickland

As every one know, groundhogs spend the winter asleep in burrows. What many people do not realize is that,unlike bears and chipmunks which merely go into an intermittently deep sleep, groundhogs go into a true hibernation that is hard to tell from death itself.

A hibernating groundhog, covered with a thick, insulating blanket of fat and curled into a tight ball,has a body temperature as low as 45 degrees F(7 degrees C) and may breathe only once every five minutes. The blood presure is drastically lowered and so is the heart beat-to four or five a minute.

It is not hard to see the advantage in this to the groundhog. By lowering the rate of its body processes, the groundhog greatly reduces the rate at which it burns up its stored fat. Even so, it loses a third or even half of its weight by the time spring arrives.

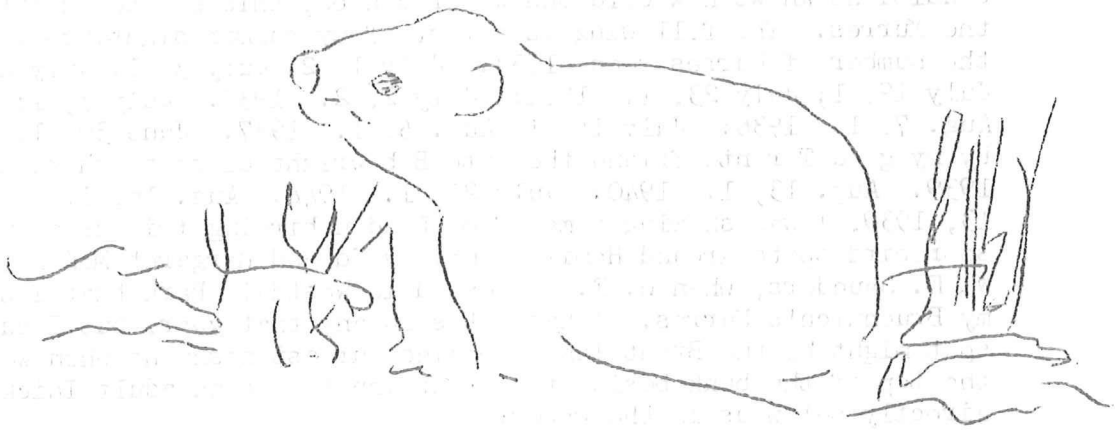
The winter survival of groundhogs is remarkable enough, but the mechanism which wakes them up is even more amazing. We find that no amount of coffee, cold water in the face or anything else can ease the misery of getting up at four or five in the morning for an early start on a spring fishing trip. And yet, every groundhog puts us to shame each spring by an almost unbelievable return from five or six months of near death to full wakefulness in just a few hours.

How does the groundhog succeed where groggy people fail? The key is that the groundhog has large deposits of brown fat-as well as the white fat we possess. The difference is that the brown fat, when burned by the body, can produce 20 times as much heat as white fat. In fact, at peak efficiency, the brown fat of a groundhog generates as much as 800 calories per minute.

It is almost as if the groundhog's layer of fat were a built-in "electric blanket: that is switched on automatically when the first warmth seeps into the frigid burrow and signals that winter has gone. As the brown fat 'turns on'. the groundhog's temperature, breathing rate,heart beat and blood pressure start to rise and the half-frozen muscles shiver fitfully. Before long, the recovery is complete and the groundhog emerges into the sunny world above.

As babies, we humans have brown fat around the neck and between the shoulder blades, but as adults we have long since lost our brown fat and with it our capacity for the prodigious production of heat. About all we can do is enviously acknowledge the groundhog's superiority in the matter of waking up and welcome it back as an especially miraculous sign of spring.

(reprinted from "The Raven" published by Alongquin Provincial Park,May 1977)



# THE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL

an excerpt from

## ARCTIC OIL

The Destruction of the North

by John Livingston*

Contemporary society is threatened by the ever decreasing world supply of oil but are we really ready to sacrifice the Arctic?

To those who study evolutionary biology, one of the most striking characteristics of the process of life change is its inherent conservatism. There have of course been very dramatic changes over time, as everyone knows, and one would think that the change from some furry little insectivore of the forest litter into Homo sapiens has been anything but conservative. On the other hand, however, the process that produced that dramatic change-the process that is called adaptation-seems to be propelled by a force that is as single-mindedly reactionary as that which drives water downhill.

Some years ago the anthropologists Charles F. Hockett and Robert Ascher expressed this phenomenon in what they called 'Romer's Rule' after Alfred Romer, the great vertebrate paleontologist of Harvard. The rule goes like this: "The initial survival value of a favourable innovation is conservative, in that it renders possible the maintenance of a traditional way of life in the face of changed circumstances." In other words, the small changes that always turn up in individuals of every generation of living beings, if they should turn out to be advantageous(most of them aren't), will be advantageous in that they allow the possessors of those new attributes to go on doing what their ancestors always did, even though their environment may have changed.

It was in these terms that Romer explained the invasion of the land by the early air-breathing fishes, the famous lobe-finned lungfishes of 400 million years ago that eventually turned into amphibians, the first vertebrate beings on land. The lungfishes could breathe air after a fashion, and they had stumpy, strong fins. Occasionally, in a period of drought, they would find themselves stranded in a rapidly shrinking pool. At that point, those who could breathe air a little better, and whose fins were a little bigger and stronger, could lurch and struggle and wiggle their way to a safer, deeper pond. Some of these eventually turned into amphibians, some of which much later became reptiles, then birds and mammals. But what the air-breathing and the strange, thick fins really allowed them to do was to go right on being the fishes they had always been. Indeed, as their fins grew stronger and their lungs developed it was easier to go on being fishes, because it was easier to get back into the water when they had to. The drive was to continue to be fishes; it was conservative. That they changed into something else in the process was in this sense only an incidental result, and that change was only visible by hindsight-much, much later.

This means that adaptive process-innovation-is always trying to maintain the status quo. It is like the constant adjustments that the carpenter or the gunner makes to keep the little air-bubble in the middle of the spirit level. Tilting toward balance. But balance is of course never achievable because the spirit level won't keep still; environments are constantly changing. And just as change is constant, so too the compensating air-bubble adjustments are constant. This is the dynamic of evolutionary adaptation. In the process of being ultra-conservative, living beings change in spite of themselves. In the process of struggling back to the water, the air-breathing lungfishes became amphibians-though they never had intended to do

The Bottom of the Barrel (continued)

so. A series of insignificant incremental changes over time had resulted in a qualitatively different being-a new kind of being. As we saw with both biological communities and with cultures, however, the precise point of the 'threshold' of qualitative change can never be fixed-merely approximated-and that only long after the fact.

As it turns out, Romer's Rule-the innate conservatism of evolutionary innovation-may be applied quite comfortably to events and contexts that on the surface at least have precious little connection to biological evolution. There can be no better example of the conservative nature of innovation. There can be no better example of the conservative nature of innovation and of adaptation than the contemporary 'energy crisis'. Leaving aside the fact that no one knows what energy is, and leaving aside also the fact that,whatever it is, it streams from the sun constantly and uninterruptedly, and will do so through the lifetime of this solar arrangement, let us look at the 'crisis'.

The crisis is not one of energy; energy is all-pervasive and continuing, world without end. The crisis is one of oil. Oil is the collected carcasses of innumerable microscopic organisms who died very long ago but who did not decompose in the usual way. Entrapped as they were, probably by sedimentation, the energy in their tiny bodies was not released back to space as rapidly as is normally the case with larger beings. By converting multitudes of these ancient beings into gasoline, we simply speed up their journey a little bit. One of these days we will have unearthed all of them, to rejoin their kindred in the great heat sink in the sky.

But long-dead animalcules are not what the crisis is all about. It is about our millions upon millions of machines that depend on oil. And then again the difficulty is not really our oil-guzzling machines; they were not foisted upon us by the Almighty as a necessary condition for being human. We created the machines, all by ourselves, in a time when there was plenty of oil to feed them. We became as dependent upon them as they were dependent upon oil. In the process, we have become as addicted to oil as our ancestors the lungfish were addicted to water. It follows quite natrually that in our conservative drive to continue to use our oil-fired machines we will go to any lengths whatever either to get oil for them or to devise a substitute for oil which we can use in the same or a similar combustion process. We want to go on being fishes.

We are quite capable, as a society, of committing criminal acts in the search for oil or for the raw material for some synthetic fuel, rather than peaceably looking for other ways of doing things. It is quite possible that in our frantic thrashing about for ways to keep the internal-combustion engine turning we may well, like lungfishes, stumble over some favourable innovation that will allow us to go on doing the same traditional things in the face of changed circumstances such as the absence of oil. Or we may not. We should remember that only a very few of the lungfishes turned into amphibians. Some kept on being lungfishes, but most perished, high and dry. The fossil record is full of them.

It is the (perfectly natural) force of radical conservatism that we now see at work in the Arctic. The industrial juggernaut is driven by it. The drive is born not out of greed, nor of aggressiveness, nor even of the lust for corporate or political dominance. It is born of fear. And no fear is so profound as the fear of change.

PART TWO NEXT ISSUE OF THE WOOD DUCK

(*Reprinted from Nature Canada, Oct-Dec. 1981)

Vol. 35, No. 8

## NOTEWORTHY BIRD RECORDS

Number of species recorded to March 15, 1982 - 11-

* - indicates first record for the year
F - indicates first record for the migration

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pied-billed Grebe | Mar. 14* | 1 | Dundas Hydro Station | Bob Finlayson |
| | Mar. 15 | 1 | Mount Albion | Copeland, Olmste d |
| Mute Swan | Feb. 21 | 3 | Oakville | Denys Gardiner |
| Whistling Swan | Mar. 12* | 39 | over Dundas Marsh | Bob Finlayson |
| | Mar. 14 | 110 | Dundas Marsh | Finlayson, Olmsted |
| Canada Goose | Mar. 7 | 300 | Bronte | De nys Gardiner |
| Lesser Snow | Feb. 16 | 1 | Christie Cons. Area | Tom & Anne Reid |
| Goose | Feb. 20 | 1 | Bronte Harbour | Michael Clark |
| Mallard | Jan. 9 | 3000 | Shell Pier, Bronte | Michael Clark |
| Gadwall | Feb. 21F | 6 | Taquanyah Cons. Area | Bruce Duncan |
| Green-winged Teal | Feb. 21F | 1 | Taquanyah Cons. Area | Bruce Duncan |
| N. Shoveler | Mar. 6F | 2 | Confederation Park | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Re d head | Mar. 6F | 3 | Fifty Point, Winona | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Canvasback | Mar. 6F | 3 | Fifty Point, Winona | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Greater Scaup | Feb. 20 | 200 | Windermere Basin | Michael Clark |
| | Mar. 6 | 500 | Windermere Basin | Michael Clark |
| Lesser Scaup | Feb. 20 | 1 | Windermere Basin | Michael Clark |
| Barrow's Goldeneye | Feb.20, 26 | 1 | Brant Inn site | McLaughlin; Gardiner |
| | Feb. 28 | 1 | East end of Bay | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Harlequin Duck | Feb. 20* | 1 | Howard Av Oakville | Kevin McLaughlin |
| White-winged | Feb. 20 | 4 | Shell Pier Bronte | Michael Clark |
| Scoter | Mar. 6 | 9 | Shell Pier, Bronte | Michael Clark |
| Ruddy Duck | Feb. 27 | 1 | East end of Bay | Denys Gardiner |
| Hooded Merganser | Feb. 27 | 1 | East end of Bay | Denys Gardiner |
| | Mar. 14 | 2 | Dundas Hydro Station | Bob Finlayson |
| Com. Merganser | Mar. 6F | 500 | East end of Bay | Michael Clark |
| Red-br. Merganser | Feb. 20 | 4 | Lake at Guelph L | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Turkey Vulture | Mar. 14* | 3 | Grimsby Peak | Copeland, Meyers |
| Goshawk | Feb. 15 | 1 | Slote Rd. Copetown | Bill Campbell |
| | Mar. 13F | 1 | Grimsby Peak | Jim Dowall et al. |
| | Mar. 14 | 2 | Grimsby Peak | Peter Thoem et al. |
| | Mar. 15 | 4 | Grimsby Peak | Walter Klabunde |
| Sharp-shinned | Feb. 13 | 1 | Lowville | Denys Gardiner |
| H awk | Mar. 7 | 1 | Bronte Harbour | Kevin McLaughlin |
| | Mar. 15 F | 1 | Grimsby Peak | Walter Klabunde et al. |
| Cooper's Hawk | Mar. 15F | 3 | Grimsby Peak | Walter Klabunde et al. |
| Red-tailed | Feb. 27F | 8 | Grimsby Peak | Dave Copeland |
| Hawk | Mar. 6 | 76 | Grimsby Peak | Dave Copeland |
| | Mar. 15 | 187 | Grassies | Dave Copeland |
| Red-shouldered | Mar. 10* | 2 | Grimsby Peak | Walter Klabunde |
| Hawk | Mar. 15 | 172 | Grimsby Peak | W. Klabunde et al. |
| Rough-legged | Feb. 27F | 8 | Grimsby Peak | Dave Copeland |
| Hawk | Mar. 6 | 3 | Grimsby Peak | Dave Copeland |
| | Mar. 15 | 1 | over Dundas Marsh | Bob Finlayson |
| Bald Eagle | Mar. 15F | 1 ad. | Grassies | Dave Copeland |
| Marsh H awk | Feb. 28F | 1 | Grimsby Peak | Dave Copeland |
| Peregrine Falcon | Feb. 15* | 1 | Grimsby Peak | Eric Single et al. |
| Merlin | Feb. 14 | 1 | Pleasant V. Dundas | Michael Clark |
| Am. Kestrel | Mar . 1F | 1 | Grimsby Peak | Dave Copeland |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Killdeer | Mar. | 11* | 1 Dundas Dump | Bob Finlayson |
| | Mar. | 13 | 3 Dundas Dump | Bob Finlayson |
| | Mar. | 14 | 11 Dundas Dump | Bob Finlayson |
| Glaucous Gull | Mar. | 8F | 1 Du ndas Dump | Bob Finlayson |
| Gt. Black-backed Gull | Mar. | 6 | 14 Van Wagner's Beach | Michael Clark |
| Herring Gull | Feb. | 27F | 2000 Bronte Harbour | Michael Clark |
| Ring-billed Gull | Mar. | 14F | 150FBeamer Cons. Area | Dave Copeland |
| Snowy Owl | Jan. | 2* | 1 Hagersville | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Short-eared Owl | Mar. | 6 | 3 Allangrove Dr Burl. | Denys Gardiner |
| Yellow-shafted | Feb. | 14 | 1 U. Middle Road | Denys Gardiner |
| Flicker | Mar. | 7 | 2 Robinson St Grimsby | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Pileate d Woodpecker | Feb. | 14 | 1 Sulphur Springs | Kevin McLaughlin |
| | Mar. | 2 | 1 Upper Middle Road | Denys Gardiner |
| Y ellow-b. Sapsucker | Mar. | 7 | 1 Hwy. 20 at Mountain | Gerald Whitworth |
| Ea stern Phoebe | Mar. | 14* | 1 Beamer Cons. Area | Jack McInally |
| Horned Lark | Feb. | 6 | 15 Fulton | Denys Gardiner |
| | Feb. | 24 | 50 Brock Road | Tom & Anne Reid |
| Common Raven | Mar. | 6* | 1 over Concession St. | Jerry Whitworth |
| Common Crow | Feb. | 21 | 3000 Hamilton City Hall | Michael Clark |
| T ufted Titmouse | Feb. | 21* | 1 Tanager, Burlington | Charlie Townson |
| Re d-breasted N uthatch | Feb. | 14 | 1 H olyrood Rd Oakville | Gardiner, Gunn |
| N. Mockingbird | Feb. | 19 | 1 Ryckman's Corners | Bruce Duncan |
| American Robin | March | 1 | 1 York, Ontario | Bruce Duncan |
| | March | 10F | 5 Westdale | David Agro |
| Cedar Waxwing | Feb. | 21 | 24 Third Line Oakville | Denys Gardiner |
| Northern Shrike | Feb. | 28 | 1 Woodland Cemetery | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Loggerhead Shrike | Jan. | 3*1 | 1 27 Skyline Dr Dundas | Michael Clark |
| E. Meadowlark | Feb. | 24 | 1 River Rd. Cayuga | Kevin McLaughlin |
| | Mar. | 8F | 1 Peters Corners | Bill Campbell |
| Red-winged | Feb. | 28F | 2 Taquanyah Cons. Area | Bruce Duncan |
| Blackbird | Mar. | 6 | 3 Confederation Park | Kevin McLaughlin |
| | Mar. | 12 | 8 Dundas Hydro Station | Bob Finlayson |
| Bronzed Grackle | Mar. | 6F | 1 Confederation Park | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Purple Finch | Mar. | 14F | 3 Beamer Cons. Area | Cherriere, Copeland |
| House Finch | Mar. | 12 | 1 857 Eagle Drive | Laurel North |
| Pine Grosbeak | Mar. | 8 | 4 Hwy. 8 above Dundas | Tom & Anne Reid |
| Hoary Re dpoll | Feb. | 21 | 1 27 Skyline Dr Dundas | Michael Clark |
| | Mar. | 6 | 1 27 Skyline Dr Dundas | Michael Clark |
| Common Redpoll | Mar. | 6 | 70 Upper Middle Road | Denys Gardiner |
| | Mar. | 8 | 2 Hwy. 8 above Dundas | Tom & Anne Reid |
| | Mar. | 12 | 1 857 Eagle Drive | Laurel North |
| Pine Siskin | Feb. | 14 | 40 H olyrood Rd Oakville | Gardiner, Gunn |
| | Mar. | 6 | 3 Dundas Marsh | Michael Clark |
| Red Crossbill | Mar. | 3* | 2 6058 Cedar Springs Road | Nancy Johnston |
| White-winged | Jan. | 17 | 11 Forsyth & Sterling Sts. | Gerald Chapple |
| Crossbill | Mar. | 7 | 1 Beamer Cons. Area | Jerry Whitworth |
| Oregon Junco | Feb. | 21 | 1 Reed's Road Cayuga | Kevin McLaughlin |
| Song Sparrow | Feb. | 17 | 1 Treeland Burlington | Adam Harrington |
| | Mar. | 14 | 1 Burlington Golf Club | George North |
| Snow Bunting | Feb. | 14 | 27 Treeland, Burlington | Adam Harrington |
| | Mar. | 6 | 50 Kelson Ave. Winona | Kevin McLaughlin |
| | Mar. | 10 | 1 Treeland, Burlington | Adam Harrington |
| | Mar. | 13 | 60 Beamer Cons. Area | Jim Dowall |

Please send your bird records by the 10th of the month to George W. North, 857 Eagle Drive, Burlington, Ont., L7T 3A3, or phone 634-5463

## JIM BAILLIE MEMORIAL BIRD COUNT - MAY 1, 1982

The "Baillie Birdathon" is being held this year at Long Point on Saturday, May 1. Roger Tory Peterson is the delebrity birder on this year's count and will undoubtedly raise a great deal of money for the Long Point Bird Observatory as well as draw crowds anxious to have him autograph copies of his revised field guide. As usual, the Hamilton Naturalists' Club will be participating in the count with Bob Curry being our official representative. One-quarter of the money raised by Bob will be placed in our Sanctuary Fund while the other three-quarters will go to the Long Point Bird Observatory and the Jim Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research.

In each of the past four years, the Hamilton Naturalists' Club has raised well over $1,000. on the Baillie Birdathon and we hope to do so again this year. You can help by sponsoring Bob on the Count. Your sponsorship works as follows: if you pledge 10¢ for each species of bird that Bob sees on May 1 in the Long Point area and he sees 107 species, then you would donate 10¢ x 107 = $10.70 to the Birdathon. All donations are tax deductible.

Please use the form below if you wish to sponsor Bob and thanks for your support of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club and the Long Point Bird Observatory.

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## EXHIBITION OF CANADIAN LANDSCAPES AT R.B.G.

Paintings by Philip Sybal
Preview April 4, 7.30 p.m. to May 21
weekdays 9a.m - 5p.m.
in the R.B.G. library

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Mail to: Birdathon, Hamilton Naturalists' Club
P. O. Box 5182, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4L3

I will sponsor BOB CURRY at the rate of ..... per species of bird seen by him on the 1982 Baillie Birdathon.

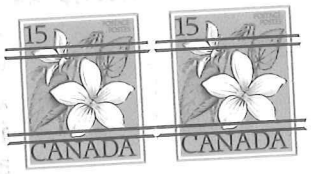
NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

POSTMASTER:

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

TO: P.O. BOX 5182
HAMILTON, ONTARIO
L8S 4L3




Dr.& Mrs. E. Dinniwell,
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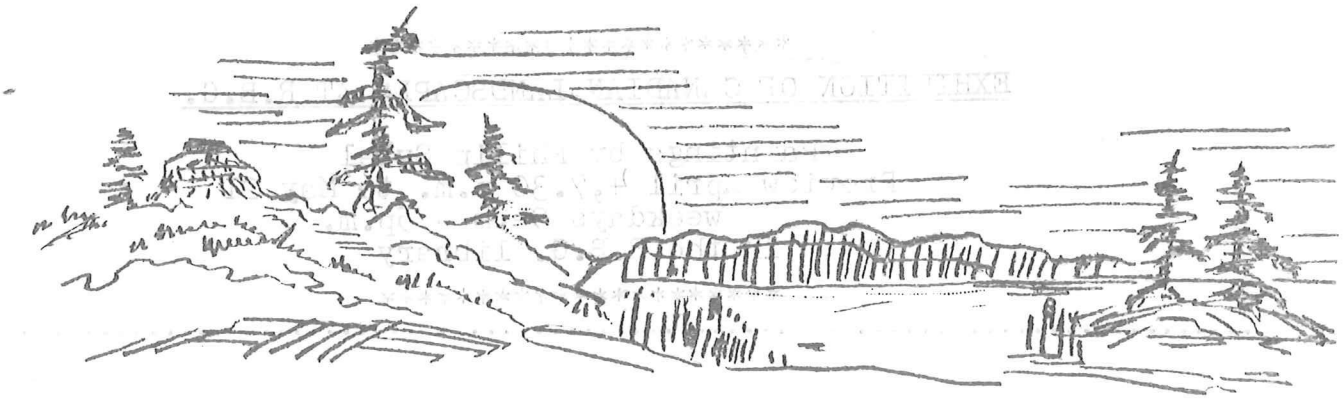
HAMILTON, Ont.
L9C 2R2 J



THE WOOD DUCK

The WOOD DUCK is the official publication of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club and is produced by volunteer members of the Club. The WOOD DUCk is published 9 times yearly from September to May inclusive and it is mailed free to members. Contributions for publication are most welcome and should be addressed to the Editor, Marvin Grove, 500 Main St.,E., Hamilton, Ontario L8N 1K7. Deadline for receipt of material is the 1st of the month preceding publication date. Articles may be reprinted without permission but credit lines would be appreciated. Send Noteworthy Bird Records to Geo. North,857 Eagle Dr.,Burlington,Ont.L7T 3A3